



# **District Personnel Management and Supervision**

## **Module XIV**

# What you will learn in this module

- Who is responsible for conservation district personnel administration.
- Guidance to assist board members with the challenges of managing and supervising district employees.
- The importance of having position descriptions, performance standards, a performance review system, and personnel policies.

# Personnel Administration

- The conservation district board is responsible for the personnel administration of their employees which involves:
  - Procedures.
  - Documentation.
  - Management.
  - Supervision.
- Responsibility includes functions such as:
  - Position descriptions.
  - Hiring, training, and dismissal.
  - Leave approval.
  - Performance reviews.

# Personnel Administration

- NRCS will not supervise conservation district employees.
  - Will provide specified training.
  - Will provide technical guidance.
- Coordination of work arrangement and responsibilities with other agencies should be included in an agreement. (For NRCS, it is the Local Operational Agreement.)
- Division of Conservation offers training and assistance when guidance is sought by the conservation district.

# Challenges in Supervising District Employees

- Some board members may not be familiar with the legal responsibilities of being an “employer.”
- Some board members may not have experience in dealing with personnel issues.
- It is difficult for board members to monitor employee’s performance, attendance, and workplace conduct since they are not in the office on a daily basis.

# Overcoming Challenges

- Board members must be familiar with legal requirements, i.e., hiring practices, employment taxes, Workers Compensation Insurance, unemployment insurance, and Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).
- Minimizing the need of daily supervision starts with hiring an employee that is an independent self-starter with motivation and good organizational and communication skills.

# Overcoming Challenges

- Provide employees with information about the conservation district which includes:
  - District Policies.
  - Long Range Plan.
  - Annual Work Plan.
- District board members must set overall direction for their employees. Set clear expectations and goals.

# Overcoming Challenges

- Develop an effective communication strategy.
  - Have the board chairperson or board's designee be the “immediate supervisor” and/or the primary liaison between the board and district employees.
  - Call or drop by office between meetings to see how things are going.
- Be familiar with strategies on handling personnel related issues.



# Overcoming Challenges

- To assist in effectively supervising employees the following are required:
  - Position descriptions.
  - Performance standards.
  - Performance review system.
  - Personnel policies.
- The next several slides will provide more information and tips on the above items.

# Position Descriptions

- A structured document assigning work to a given position as it is expected to be performed after customary orientation and training.
- Should accurately and completely describe the predominate duties and responsibilities that are assigned and performed.
- Cannot and does not list every task an employee must perform.

# Position Descriptions

- Well-written, clear, and concise PD assists in personnel management in a variety of ways, including:
  - Determining knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform the job.
  - Clarifying roles, responsibilities, and working relationships.
  - Recruiting new employees by streamlining the application and interviewing process.
  - Assisting in the measurement and monitoring of work performance after person is hired.

# Position Descriptions

- Components usually include:
  - Position title.
  - Essential duties and responsibilities.
  - Required levels of education and work experience.
  - Information regarding the work environment and any physical requirements for the job.
  - Work-related issues, such as the position's travel obligations, normal work schedule, physical location where duties will be carried out, supervisory relationships.

# Position Descriptions

- Position Description Tips:
  - Include essential information. Maintain a balance between too much and too little information.
  - Update regularly. Have employees periodically review and identify any changes in their job duties since the descriptions were last reviewed, ideally in conjunction with the annual performance review. When additional personnel is hired board members should review the current employee's position description.

# Performance Standards

- Provides the employee with specific performance expectations for each major duty.
- Explains how the job is to be done, plus the results that are expected for satisfactory job performance.

# Performance Standards

- Performance Standards Tips:
  - In addition to statements on skills, also include desired behaviors, i.e. friendliness, helpfulness, courteousness, and punctuality.
  - Base on the position, not the individual.
  - Make them meaningful, reasonable, and attainable.
  - Express in terms of quantity, quality, timeliness, cost, safety, or outcomes.
  - Solicit employee's input and agreement on performance standards.

# Personnel Policies

- A set of statements that explain what the employer expects from its employees (including acceptable and not acceptable conduct), and what employees may expect from the employer.
- Guidelines for personnel decision-making.
- Reflects a business' values system.



# Personnel Policies

- Reasons to have written personnel policies:
  - Best way to make sure employees have the information they need about the employment relationship. Employees need to know the rules.
  - By formulating policies before they are needed will assist in avoiding potential emotional-based decision making while under pressure.
  - Establish uniformity. Consistency and uniformity will help ensure fairness in personnel decisions.

# Personnel Policies

- Reasons to have written personnel policies (cont.):
  - Very helpful in addressing a variety of employment-related questions.
  - Gives an employer a standardized way of handling a conflict or crisis situations.
  - Much easier to take a negative employment action.
  - Well-written policies are one of your best defenses against employment law claims.

# Personnel Policies

- Three categories that should be developed:
  1. Hiring and employment policies, i.e., hiring procedures, benefits, supervision, performance reviews, discipline, and reasons for termination.
  2. General policies, i.e., Equal Employment Opportunity statement, alcohol and drugs in the workplace, anti-harassment, employee safety regulations, and grievance procedure.
  3. Everyday policies, i.e., work schedule, overtime provisions, dress code, and conduct.

# Personnel Policies

- Personnel Policies Tips:
  - Should be written, reasonable, distributed to every employee and board member, and consistently followed.
  - Current employees sign (if haven't already done so) an affidavit that they have received a copy of the personnel policies/manual.

# Personnel Policies

- Personnel Policies Tips (cont.):
  - New employees should receive and sign for a copy of the personnel policies/manual on their first day of employment.
  - Should be reviewed during employee orientation and annually with employees and board members.

# Performance Reviews

- Alternative names include:
  - Performance Appraisals.
  - Employee Evaluations.
- A method by which the job performance of an employee is evaluated using stated performance standards as a basis.
- A practical and well-designed employee review system is a vital element to retain and encourage employees.
- Conducted by the conservation district board or the immediate supervisor.

# Performance Reviews

- The purpose is to:
  - Give employee and board members a chance to reflect on the last year.
  - Give and get feedback.
  - Develop a plan of action for continued improvement.
- The review process is meant to be a key component of employee's long-term learning and growth, as well as a chance for your conservation district to enhance its work.

# Performance Reviews

- Primary benefits of an effective performance reviews include:
  - Identifies underperformers and those who excel so sound decisions can be made regarding pay rates, training – or if necessary discipline or discharge.
  - Provides a positive incentive for improved performance.
  - Improves communication.
  - Legally protects your conservation district.
  - Shows you care about your employees.



# Performance Reviews

- Performance Review Tips:
  - Informal reviews/discussions should take place with employees throughout the review period.
  - Formal review should be conducted with employee at the end of probationary period and then on an annual basis. Board review and discussion should be done in an executive session.
  - Employee should receive the blank performance review/evaluation form right after being hired.

# Performance Reviews

- Performance Review Tips (cont.):
  - Prepare for the meeting in advance.
  - Get input from those who work with employee, as well as customers.
  - Before formal review have employee complete a self-evaluation form.
  - Provide honest, constructive feedback.
  - Have employee sign evaluation. Signature does not necessarily indicate agreement with review, only that the review has been discussed with the employee.

# Review Question

1. Who is responsible for the personnel administration of a conservation district employee?

# Review Answer

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Conservation District Board

# Review Question

2. Why is it particularly challenging for board members to ensure that their employee is consistently meeting performance, attendance, and workplace conduct expectations?

# Review Answer

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Board members are not in the office on a daily basis.

# Review Question

3. Position descriptions only need to be updated when hiring a new employee.

*True or False?*

# Review Answer

3. Position descriptions only need to be updated when hiring a new employee.

False. (Also, ideally in conjunction with the annual performance review.)



# Review Question

4. Performance Standards should be based on the individual?

*True or False?*

# Review Answer

4. Performance Standards should be based on the individual?

False. (Based on the position.)

# Review Question

5. When is it recommended to review personnel policies with employees?

# Review Answer

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During employee orientation and annually with board members.

# Review Question

6. An employee should receive the blank performance review/evaluation form right after being hired.

*True or False?*

# Review Answer

6. An employee should receive the blank performance review/evaluation form right after being hired.

True.

# Summary

One of the most challenging duties of conservation district supervisors may be managing and supervising employees. Districts need a system in place that provides good communication with employees and a means to deal with any personnel issues that might arise. Communicating the expectations of a position to an employee is an essential element in personnel management and productivity. Setting standards for the performance and evaluating the actual performance are inseparable from developing the position duties. Personnel policies are vital to keep the district running smoothly and the morale of the workers high.

# Resources Available

- **Resources**

- Conservation District Handbook

- SCC Staff:

- **Where to find**

- Located in each district office

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